



# State of Utah Department of Commerce

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### **Spring Into Action Before Hiring A Contractor Tips to Save Time, Money, and Aggravation**

Building or remodeling can be a dream come true...or your worst nightmare. With the start of spring and summer construction projects, the State of Utah Department of Commerce, Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing offers the following action tips to help you avoid the common problems that occur while building or remodeling a home:

1. **Prepare detailed building plans.** To ensure the end product complies with the building code and meets your expectations, investigate local building ordinances and regulations.
2. **Obtain several bids for your project.** Keep in mind that a high bid does not always represent a better product and that a very low bid could mean the contractor miscalculated or overlooked important items involved in the project.
3. **Choose a contractor carefully.** Utah state law requires all contractors and subcontractors who work in the state to be licensed by the Utah Department of Commerce. Therefore, it is important that you hire only licensed professionals to work on your building project. To do otherwise is a crime.
4. **Search on-line to verify that the contractor has a current license.** Do a licensee check and verification by accessing DOPL's Web site: [www.dopl.utah.gov](http://www.dopl.utah.gov). Click on "Licensing," then "Verify a License." You will be able to search by contractor name, business name, or license number. (Note: some contractors are licensed under the business name, rather than their individual name.)
5. **Examine the license type.** Be sure the contractor is licensed to do the specific type of work your project requires. For example, a roofing contractor may not be licensed to pour concrete.
6. **Secure a written contract.** Regardless of the size of your building project, secure the agreement in writing. Should a dispute arise, a contract verifies the terms and conditions of the project. (Be sure the contract includes any incidental changes to the order and related costs.)
7. **Obtain a building permit.** Do not allow the contractor to begin the building project before a building permit from your local city or county has been obtained. It is the contractor's responsibility to obtain the permit. The permit is to ensure inspection of the project, for your own protection.



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8. **Obtain a signed lien release prior to payment.** Ask all contractors, subcontractors and suppliers working on your project to sign lien releases prior to paying them for completed services.
9. **Be CAUTIOUS of requests for a down payment in order to purchase materials or to “solidify” the contract.** Most established contractors purchase the materials first and then present an invoice for reimbursement.
10. **Be leery of contractors who use high-pressure sales tactics.** If they want your business today, they’ll want your business tomorrow. Don’t cave in to a sales pitch requiring the work be done immediately and payment be made on the spot.

Make your next “dream come true” home building project a pleasant experience. Before hiring a contractor, spring into action and contact the Utah Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing. Save yourself time, money, and aggravation—go online at [www.dopl.utah.gov](http://www.dopl.utah.gov) and do a “licensee look-up and verification.”

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